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world, and they flung it at each other proudly, for it stood for the experience of making their way among strangers and earning sums with which to fill a large corial, and much else.

The men who had remained on the river found special pleasure in imparting to these returning ones some weighty gossip.

"At Gankwe they are burying Sedefo's younger brother," they said as the boats passed each other, and they went into the details of Zimbi's death and the kunu which was decimating the family.

"Asikanu has been charged with adultery by Matafo. Asikanu's family is offering a great fine, but it is far from settled yet."

All this was by way of preface. To come to the real news without casual preliminaries would have been the way of a child, but a Man Nengere, a full-grown Negro, knew better.

"Last year a white man came here with another one—a doctor. He said he would come back with his wife. He has brought his wife. He says they are going up the river. He says they are going to the Granman's country."

Up and down the great stretches of water as the boats passed each other, the news was given. Word and conjecture floated down river and into the creeks, reaching even the lower river Awka villages.

"The Bakra told me Awka is an African word. There is a place in Africa called Awka, and a people in Africa called Awka people. He knows Africa!"

"Kye, ba! Kye, mati!"

Word and conjecture were carried up river in the boats which were being poled upstream against the rapids. It would be some time yet before there would be legends, and songs about the American whites who had made their way into this bush. Now there could only be talk. The Bakra had a machine which talked back to you, if you talked into its horn, and when it talked back, it said the same thing you did, sang back the same song, and if you laughed, it laughed, too.

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203 And did men speak into the horn, and sing? Would there be no harm to the *ak'a*—the soul?

[113] Their own trickster, Anansi, the spider, working with his fabulous cunning, could not have spun the stories about the whites faster than had the passing boats. From boat to boat, from boat to shore, from shore to village the news went. Had the white man come with guns, or had he come accompanied by many others, then, to be sure, it would have been a matter for the drums. But the vagaries of a white man coming with his wife are of no ritual concern. The drums would only sound on occasions of moment; to sum-
[534] mon the men for a council of the clan or to ask, ritually, for the health of a chief; to tell of death; or to speak to the gods themselves. But for a white man with his woman, gossip was good enough to carry the news.

C09 Up and down the river, in the villages where they had
119 visited the year before, many a woman to whom the Bakra
648 had given a string of yellow beads, or a large glittering safety pin to put in her hair as an ornament, or, better still, a large tin can out of which her husband had fashioned a broad band to be worn on her arm, one which glistened as it reflected the pale light of the moon during a dance—such a woman heard of the coming of the Bakra with pleasure. She had them all, these gifts, safe in the carved calabash on which she had incised the sinuous lines of the snake spirit that gave her fertility, and now that the gourds were ripening once again, she would carve another to hold the new things that the whites would bring her.

The young men, too, heard of their coming with pleasure. For would not the strange ways of the Bakra and his woman give them many witty new things to put into words and sing to the traditional seketi tunes, the secular songs that they would later sing in the intervals of the religious dances? It was good to make up new words, which made a man the center of the dance. Ambe! But the women loved the man who could put clever new words to their dance songs!

The children heard the news with fear, for at four, at five, they were not too young to have learned of the enormi-

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ties of the white men of long ago and the deeds of their slave ancestors, who had won for them freedom in this bush.

But what of the old men? What of them who govern and know proverb and parable to fit all ceremonial occasions, whose word is final in clan councils? What of those who call the gods and speak to the ancestors and who, surpassing all else in wisdom, know how to control *obia*, the great healing spirit which Nyankompon, the Sky God, created after he had brought earth and water into being, so that man might live? At the landing place of the balata camp, a group of such men were gathered and stood about talking. A Loango elder who was on his way to visit his relatives at Kadyu, his lower river clan village, had espied a clansman on the shore and had come up in his boat.

"A man and a woman came. And they are going up the river until . . . until beyond the Mamadam and Baikutu, until . . . past the Felulasi Falls, until . . . they come to the Tapa Water and into the Pekien Rio, and until . . . they arrive at the Granman's village."

The speaker, a younger man who had come from up river to the death ceremonies at Gankwe spoke with a certain eagerness, and made of the telling a long recital, drawing out the singsong word "*te*"—until—more and more with each repetition, and in this way intensifying both the distance and the hardships in these vast and vaster stretches.

"Ayo! A long way. Will the Ga'ma' let them come?"

"Ya-hai, tio! You must ask, will the gods let them come!"

"Kere, kere! You must ask if the ancestors will let them come!"

"They carry no guns."

"Then they bring us their gods."

"Kweti-kweti! And that's what I don't understand. They say they come to learn."

"By Ando! But what does that mean?"

"Well, they speak the proverb down below, they say: 'It isn't for nothing that the worm crawls from side to side.'"

"Massa Neng'e, but it's true, true."

"The white man wants to get the black man's obia."

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609 "The whites have wars against each other. . . ,"
203 "Our ancestors. . ."
648 Before the last speaker could finish, a man broke in with a prayer. His voice was conversational and sounded as though he were addressing someone present.

"Great Sky God,
Kediamo, Kediampon,
Mother of the River,
Sacred ancestors,
Grant that if the white man comes for evil
His race end.
Grant that if the white woman comes for evil
Her womb wither, her line perish."

609 But the Loango headman shook his head and said, "The
203 gods will deal with them, have no fear. Do you remember
648 the man who was drowned at the Mamadam, and the one
776 who died way beyond the Granman's country, and that other one, the soldier? They came with evil in their hearts. The gods killed them. The gods will deal with these, too."

And another said: "Let them go up the river. The gods know all. The ancestors know all. This is our land, and our earth spirits will protect us, and they will kill our enemies. This is our river. Our river gods will protect us, and kill our enemies. This is our bush. The gods of the bush are strong. The gods of the bush know their bush children. They know their children's enemies."

Then the Loango elder spoke again: "We have the gods
[186] from Africa. They are more than all gods. The African gods know all. They will watch over us. We have the obia spirits, the African obia spirits. Mati, friends, let them go up the river. Have no fear. Our gods are with us."

The men's soft, sober voices spoke the words without emotion. Theirs were the voices of destiny. Well might the answering chorus intone the affirmations, while the colloquy went on of leader and chorus, leader and chorus, now one taking up the main theme, now another. To us the cadenced speech came floating softly on the still air.

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175 Now we were in the true, true Saramacca country, the land which the Bush Negro feels to be entirely his own. White men, it is true, had been here before, but only a handful, and the gods of the river, who were powerful, saw to it that of these not many got back to the white man's land. True, true Saramacca country! Every Bush Negro we met on the lower river spoke of it with the deepest feeling.

"It is all right here," one man after another had said, "but wait until you see the upper river, the true-true Saramacca!"

It was here that the first Bush Negro villages had been built, though this seemed fabulous to the strangers who, in strong boats, guided by men who were wise in the moods and courses of the river, had had nine days of hard travel on the way. The lower-river villages began to appear only after peace had been declared and had proved lasting. Eighty-six years ago men from the upper river who lived beyond the Granman's own village, in the Grand Rio, had come down and built the village of Gansee, which was some four hours' paddling upstream from the railhead.

We spoke of this to Bibifo, who himself was born in this country.

"You may well wonder, white man."

361 103 Here was no danger of having to wrest a camp from the bush at night, when the short tropical dusk came to overtake the traveler. Villages followed close, one upon the other. Here was Ma'lobbi, where the beauty of the wood [322] carver's art had made us linger beyond the time allotted to us for making the journey from S'ei to Asindopo Lantiwe. Here was Hei Kununu—High Mountain—which rose on a [133] steep slope above the river, and was pleasant to see after the long stretches of flat plain that lay below. Semoisi, noted for its riches, was there, and Pempeh, bearing a name well known in the Ashanti country in Africa. Here villages were so close to each other that they could announce our 203 approach on the talking drums.

"What is it we hear, Bayo?" we would ask.

"They are cutting down trees, Bak'a."

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We would proceed a short distance, and we would ask again, "Aren't those drums speaking?"

"Women are pounding rice."

But when we had asked the third time, he remained silent for a while, straining for the sound as though he could barely distinguish it. "Ya-hai, it's the apinti talking."

Some distance from Godo, which is situated just below the Tapa Wata falls, a small boat came up to us, paddled by one man. Bibifo whispered to us that this was Sungi, the head of the Kasito clan, and we knew that we were somewhere in the vicinity of the sacred village of Dahomey. He had come to pilot our boats into the Pikien Rio, he explained, after the greetings were over.

"Farther ahead others will come to help your boats up the rapids. I am here to show you the best course through this rough water. The G'aman has sent me to you. He awaits you."

"Bayo," we said, when Chief Sungi had left us to head up our little flotilla, "show us the landing place of Dahomey when we pass it."

We knew that we could not set foot in Dahomey, for it is the seat of the Bush Negro's most potent magic. Whether there is that in the village which the white man may not see, or whether, as we had been told, the natives do not wish to tempt the fates by bringing there those who would be doomed by the magic which kills the white man if he but treads on its earth, no one could say. But we had been warned that it would be of no avail to ask to be taken to Dahomey.

"Did you hear us, Bayo?"

"Ai!"

When we spoke to him again about the Dahomey landing place, however, he showed great astonishment. He had pointed it out to us, he said. How was it that we now asked about it again?

"It must be that it was with you like it was with the other white man who wanted to see Dahomey," he said.

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123 shoulders and arms glisten, or otherwise to make themselves
[302] presentable for the reception. There was nothing to do but to keep close to a tree-trunk, water dripping from naked body and the strip of twisted loin cloth, teeth chattering in the sudden chill brought on by the storm.

The head of Sungi was suddenly thrust inside our boat-tent.

"I saw the Granman. He says the storm is passing. You are to come to him as you are. It is best so. Waiting here is cold."

Turning, he ordered the paddlers to their places, and almost before the paddles were in motion, the guns began to fire.

"The Granman knows the time it takes to give a message. The Granman knows everything," said Bayo in great [203] admiration, as the guns saluted.

Three shots, and three more. Two shots, an interval, and another coming faintly. Then a short silence, and once more the guns, in clusters of three, but now sounding from several directions.

As we rounded the bend of the island the farther bank was alive with people. The rain had subsided to a drizzle. Across the strip of water which separated us from the shore we could see men and women and children standing about, the women with large food trays inverted over their heads to protect their finery. But the men, disdaining such aids, stood in the rain and looked on with undisguised curiosity. Boats joined ours from up and down the river. With the sound of the guns came hallooing, shrill cries which were the women's expression of enthusiasm, actual or ceremonial.

292 As we watched, several figures appeared on the high bank,
554 the others making way for them. Two of the men were not
622 dressed in the colored toga-like cloths that were worn by the others, but in coats of rich material which reached to their knees. They wore black top-hats with cockades at the side. One of these, we recognized as Chief And'u of S'ei. His coat was of deep crimson, bordered in blue, and his companion's a vivid yellow. Both of these men carried

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of earth which filled the rest of the hut. In the left-hand corner was a covered whitened vessel for the god called Kentina Dagowe. This Kentina Dagowe was a deity who was the offspring of the Dagowe snake, and the Apuku god of the bush whose name was Kentina. In him, as in so many other of the spirits, we found exemplified the Bush Negro's concept of the world which held that the gods mated as did humans, that all which stirred and had life came into being by such matings.

Other spirits also came to this house, the woman went on. Mundewaya, another of the bush gods, was worshiped at the white-covered pot in the opposite corner, while beside it lay the vessel to which the spirit of a third might come. This one was the most powerful of all bush gods, and his name was Danhowao. There were other objects on the platform. Two stools, daubed with sacred clay, had their place there, and in the center was an image of wood, a rounded pot set on a base that tapered from the ground toward it, and this was to the Nanai, the ancestors.

The old woman said, "For the Apuku gods, we only play the tumao drum. The Apuku are mostly women's gods, but some men have them, and the men who have them play the drums. When the god comes to you, then if you are not too old you dance. But we old women do not dance. When the god comes to me, then I begin to shake. I go into this house on the day we call him, and they play the drum. Then I talk to the god. If I have something to beg of him for myself, or for someone else, then I put the pot which belongs to him on my head, and the drum calls him. When my body begins to shake, then it is the god. He has come, and when I speak it is not I but the god speaking."

From the clearing the talk of those who had remained outside came through the thin woven walls of the shrine. From one to another we could hear the news spread that in the village of the Granman across the river the gods had spoken for the whites.

In the hut, we listened to the old woman inside whose shrine we stood.